

ICELANDIC CONNECTION



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ICELANDIC CONNECTION



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ON THE COVER



Clockwise from top left: the cover of *Tímarit*; The Icelandic National League of North America banner hangs in the INLNA office in Gimli; the new INLNA logo; the INL History Book, 1919 - 2009.

Editorial

Our 100 Year Legacy

by Beverly Arason Gaudet
President, INLNA 2018-2021

In 2019 the Icelandic National League of North America, Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi, proudly celebrates 100 years since its establishment in Winnipeg in March of 1919. Records show that discussions regarding an Icelandic organization that would promote and maintain the Icelandic culture started in early 1917.¹ It was of vital importance to the newly arrived Icelanders and their communities that their Icelandic heritage be preserved in the New World and at a meeting in January of 1919, a committee was chosen to “seek the co-operation of Icelandic communities in North America to maintain the Icelandic language and heritage”.²

The first annual Convention of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi was held in Winnipeg from February 25 to 27, 1919. One topic of major importance during these meetings was the need to maintain and teach the Icelandic language and to this end the League discussed promoting a teaching position for Icelandic and Norse Studies at the University of Manitoba. The League

called upon Icelandic communities across North America to support this initiative. In addition, committees were formed to foster the teaching of the Icelandic language within Icelandic communities and to acquire Icelandic textbooks. The goal of this initiative was to ensure that children of Icelandic descent in North America would continue to learn Icelandic.

Sèra Rögnvaldur Pétursson was the first President of the Icelandic National League of North America. He was born on the Parish farm of Rípur in the district of Hegranes in Skagafjörður on August 14, 1877. He settled in Winnipeg upon arriving from Iceland in 1883 and studied at Wesley College in Winnipeg, Bible College in Meadville, Pennsylvania and Harvard in Cambridge, Massachusetts. With his theology degrees firmly in hand, he returned to Winnipeg and served as the first Icelandic minister of the Unitarian congregation in Winnipeg from 1903 to 1909 and from 1915 to 1922. In addition to serving as the first President, he was also one of the founding members of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi.

1 Source: Icelandic National League of North America, 1919-2009, published 2009 by the Icelandic National League of North America: Editor-in-chief: Gwen Mann

2 Ibid

At the time of the founding of the INL he remarked “The first step is to know oneself, and this one cannot do, who knows nothing of the history of the people from whom one is descended. In every civilized country, history and literature are the basis of higher education. To be fully developed as individuals and the best possible citizens of this, their country, the people of Icelandic origin must study their own language and literature at the same time as the official courses of study.”³

During the first Convention, Séra Kjartan Helgason, a special guest from Árnassýsla in southwest Iceland and representative from the Icelandic League in Reykjavík, was elected as the first honorary member of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi. The tradition of bestowing Honorary Lifetime Membership upon a member of an INLNA organization who has demonstrated outstanding service through involvement in a member organization, involvement in understanding and promoting Icelandic culture and heritage, and involvement in community activities has continued to this day.

After much discussion, a consensus was reached and the mission statement of the INL was declared to be:

To encourage people of Icelandic descent to become the best possible citizens of their new homeland.

To maintain and strengthen the Icelandic language and literature in North America.

To work in co-operation with all Icelanders on both side of the Atlantic.

This mission statement has survived for one hundred years and is still an accurate reflection of the values and goals of the INLNA today.

The members of the Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi in 1919 were from



Beverly Arason Gaudet

across Canada and the United States and included the members from the following communities: Árborg, Bifröst, Framnes, Geysir, Gimli, Hayland, Hove, Hnausa, Lundar, Northstar, Oak View, Otto, Riverton, Silver Bay, Siglunes, Stony Hill, Thornhill, Vogar, Víður, and Winnipeg, Manitoba; Churchbridge, Dafoe, Foam Lake, Kandahar, Hólar, Leslie, Springwater, Tantallon, and Wynyard, Saskatchewan; Grand Forks, Hensel, Mountain and Pembina, North Dakota; Markerville, Alberta; Tacoma, Washington; Cornell University, New York and Iceland.

The Second Annual Convention occurred in February of 1920 and was

³ Ibid

presided over by President Rögnvaldur Pétursson; it was reported that the prior year's goal of teaching Icelandic appeared to be successful as classes had been established by both the home chapter, Frón, in Winnipeg and by the club in Wynyard, SK. The Convention focused on League expansion and charged the executive to visit Icelandic districts to raise interest and to sell the publication, Tímairt, the annual publication of the League. On the final day of the convention, the need to expand the League into Icelandic communities outside of Winnipeg and across North America was raised. It was decided that it was vital to encourage communities to form their own chapters of the League and to this end another committee was formed. Additionally, the need to ensure cooperation between Icelanders in Iceland and Icelanders in North America was discussed. Two interesting ideas to further cooperation were to send desirable members of the League in North America to Iceland on business and to encourage North American students to travel to the University of Iceland to study the Icelandic language and to learn about their ancestral country. These ideas sound somewhat akin to the International Visitors Program of today and the work that the Snorri Foundation in Iceland has been doing for the past twenty years.

The INLNA Conventions and Annual General Meetings continued to take place in Winnipeg from the first meeting to 1919 up to and including 1985. Since 1986, the Conventions have alternated between various member clubs of the INLNA and have occurred in the following locations (consecutively since 1986): Vancouver, BC; Gimli, MB; Innisfail, AB; Wynyard, SK; Winnipeg, MB; New Westminster, BC; Hecla, MB; Gimli, MB; Selkirk, MB; Toronto, ON; Winnipeg, MB; Calgary, AB; Brandon, MB; Toronto,

ON; Gimli, MB; New Westminster, BC; Minneapolis, MN; Edmonton, AB; Hecla, MB; Wynyard, SK; Victoria, BC; Winnipeg, MB; Calgary, AB; Gimli, MB; Toronto, ON; Edmonton, AB; Brandon, MB; Seattle, WA; Winnipeg, MB; Minneapolis, MN; Vancouver, BC; Grand Forks, ND; Edmonton, AB and returning once again to Winnipeg, MB, in 2019. The first Convention held in the United States was in 2002 when the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota hosted.

The Conventions continue to be a time to celebrate our Icelandic heritage and to work towards programs that promote our Icelandic culture. The Annual General Meeting provides discussion on the League's activities from the prior year including reviewing the activities of the Executive and Board Directors, current INLNA programs, future activities and initiatives, the League's financial statements and the election of the Executive and Board of Directors for the year going forward.

It is a nearly impossible task to catalog the events of the past 100 years however the following are acknowledged as some of the key moments in time:

- 1977: Stefan J. Stefanson, the then current INLNA President, was asked by a young woman if she could present a resolution at the upcoming Convention asking that all minutes and records of the INL be presented in English. Until this time all business was conducted in Icelandic only and some felt that membership in the League was dwindling as a result. After the presentation of the resolution only three individuals spoke against the proposal; President Stefanson then called for the vote which was passed almost unanimously - with only three dissenters. Since then all meetings and record keeping has been conducted in English.
- The first female President of the INLNA was Mrs. Evelyn Thorvaldson who served

from 1991 to 1992.

- 1991: INL Historian, Nelson Gerrard proposed the production of an Icelandic Heritage Calendar to raise the profile of our Icelandic heritage, to educate the public about Icelandic holidays, and to serve as a fundraiser for the League. Nelson piloted this project from 1992 to 2003 and it has been managed by a committee within the INLNA since that time.
- 1995: Elva Simundsson was Membership Director and proposed a list service be established as a means to easily communicate with subscribers via email on topics related to the North American Icelandic community. The list is still in use today to easily communicate with subscribers who wish to be informed of Icelandic activities within North America and/or Iceland.
- 1995: Robert Asgeirsson thought the INLNA should have a website which would be accessible to all and after some investigation, he established the first INLNA website. After 10 years of dedicated commitment, Holly Ralph took over the role of Webmaster which she continues to hold to this day.
- The International Visits Program, IVP, was created in 1996 by Gail Einarson-McCleery as a vehicle to sustain a cultural exchange program between Iceland and North America. The first visitor from Iceland to North America was art critic Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson, a former curator of the National Gallery of Iceland.
- 2001: the first Snorri West participants from Iceland received the opportunity to visit New Iceland and the province of Manitoba; the program was coordinated by Wanda Anderson and she very ably ran this program for many years. Today the Snorri West program is coordinated by the INLNA.
- The first INLNA President from the United States was Ms. Claire Eckley who served from 2014 to 2016 and was a member of the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota and the Icelandic Hekla Club.
- 2003: the INLNA established the Laurence S.G. Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award which is bestowed upon a recipient for “contributions not only to the Icelandic Community but also in the community at large”. The awards honours Laurence S.G. Johnson who served as President of both the Bruin Chapter in Selkirk, MB and as INLNA President from 1995 to 1998 and served his community in ways far too numerous to mention.
- 2017: the Joan Inga Eyolfson Cadham Award was established to recognize individuals who have been outstanding in the promotion of Icelandic culture and heritage by way of literature, arts or media. It was established to honour Joan Eyolfson Cadham, an adventurer, journalist and weaver of stories who was best known in the Icelandic community as the editor of the *Lögberg-Heimskringla* from 2011 to 2014.
- 2018: the first Snorri Deaf participants from Iceland arrived in Canada; this program was led as a pilot project by Sunna Furstenaus, Past President of the INLNA. In 2019, the program will be going to Iceland.

Today INLNA programs include Snorri West, International Visits Program, INL Reads!, Donald K. Johnson Film Series, the annual Calendar project, the INLNA Newsletter, Biographies project, INLNA Facebook page, INLNA website, an on-line store featuring INLNA branded merchandise, and more. For the past several years, a vast amount of effort has been put into applying for Charitable Status in Canada which is seen as an opportunity for additional fundraising which will allow

the League to offer monetary support to many worthy endeavours.

Every effort is made to communicate with our member clubs, affiliate clubs and individual members via our quarterly Newsletter, website postings, Facebook postings, INL list emails and bi-monthly Presidents meetings where club Presidents or their representatives meet with INLNA board members via a video chat to discuss League or club current events.

Currently the INLNA is very fortunate and thankful to have the support of the following clubs: Arborg, MB, Esjan Chapter; Blaine, WA, Blaine Icelandic Heritage Society; Brandon, MB, Icelandic Canadian Club of Western Manitoba; Calgary, AB, Leif Eiriksson Icelandic Club of Calgary; Edmonton, AB, Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton; Gimli, MB, Gimli Icelandic Canadian Society; via Internet, Icelandic Online Club; Lundar, MB, Lundar Chapter; Markerville, AB, Stephan G. Stephansson Icelandic Society; Minnesota, Icelandic Hekla Club; Minnesota, Icelandic American Association of Minnesota; Moorhead, MN, F-M Icelandic Klub; Mountain, ND, Icelandic Communities Association; Ottawa, ON, Friends of Iceland; Saskatchewan, Icelandic Club of Saskatchewan, Vatnabyggð; Seattle, WA, Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle; Selkirk, MB, Bruin Chapter; Toronto, ON, Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto; Utah, Icelandic Association of Utah; Vancouver, BC, Icelandic Canadian Club of British Columbia; Victoria, BC, Icelanders of Victoria; Washington, DC, Icelandic Association of Washington DC; and Winnipeg, MB, Icelandic Canadian Frón.

The INLNA also acknowledges

support from the Icelandic Care Home Höfn Society, Icelandic Festival of Manitoba, Icelandic Memorial Society Nova Scotia, Icelandic River Heritage Sites, Icelandic Roots, Lestrarfélagið Gleym-mér-ei, New Iceland Heritage Museum, Manassas Viking Festival and a number of individual members.

An essay by the first President, Séra Rögnvaldur Pétursson, which appeared in Icelandic in the first issue of *Tímarit* celebrated the Icelandic spirit which was very much alive in the Icelanders who had immigrated to North America. He states that "They have always viewed their heritage as the embodiment of who they are, their worth in life and the direction they choose. In today's Icelandic-American and Canadian communities this pride is evident".⁴ It was their pride in their native Iceland that was the driving force behind the formation of the INLNA and that same pride exists today in every Icelandic community, club, organization and North American Icelander.

As the current President of the INLNA, I am humbled and honoured to be following in the footsteps of the forward thinking and dedicated founders who established the INLNA during the meetings of March of 1919. In this 100th year, I celebrate this accomplishment and offer congratulations to everyone who has impacted the INLNA in the past 100 years; whether as a member of a local Icelandic club, an INLNA volunteer or a board member, an individual supporter, a Snorri West host, an IVP host, an audience member at an INLNA film series presentation, or the countless other ways that have made an impact, everyone who has supported the INLNA has contributed to making it what it is today.

⁴ Ibid

An organization does not celebrate a centennial without the commitment of its members, past and present, and the fact that the INLNA has not only sustained its existence but has continued to grow and thrive one-hundred years after its initial establishment is an exemplary example of the indomitable Icelandic spirit. The same

spirit that caused a group of Icelanders, desperate to keep Icelandic culture and traditions alive in their new country, to form this organization is very much alive and well in the INLNA members of today.

As our Coat of Arms says, Römm er sú taug – Strong is the Bond, and indeed it is.

The Founding of the Icelandic National League of North America

This and the following two articles are reprinted with permission from the *Icelandic National League of North America 1919 - 2009 History Book*

The information in this chapter comes primarily from an essay written by the first President of the Icelandic National League of North America, Séra Rögnvaldur Pétursson. It appeared in Icelandic in the first issue of *Tímarit*, the annual publication of the Icelandic National League (INL).

From the beginning of emigration from Iceland in the latter part of the 19th century, the Icelandic spirit has remained a strong aspect of everyday life for those living in North America. They have always viewed their heritage as the embodiment of who they are, their growth in life and the directions they choose. In today's Icelandic-American and Canadian communities this pride is evident. Arguably, that they have accomplished more in honouring their heritage than their ancestors would

ever have envisioned. This is clearly illustrated by the newspapers *Heimskringla* (est. 1886) and *Lögberg* (est. 1888) and published *Lögberg-Heimskringla* since 1959. Another major accomplishment of heritage preservation is the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature as well as an immense library of Icelandic books, other print material and archival resources at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. As well, Íslendingadagurinn or the 'Icelandic Celebration' is held annually at Gimli – to which 50,000 people come to embrace their heritage and meet other from all over Canada, the U.S. and Iceland. A similar event called 'August-The-Deuce' is held at Mountain, North Dakota. There are museums, libraries, parks, historic sites, clubs, events, and celebrations held yearly across North America to promote

and maintain interest in their shared culture, language and history. This is quite staggering considering the size of Iceland and numbers of people who left the country during the years of mass emigration.

Perhaps the single most influential organization in fostering Icelandic heritage in North America is the Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi or Icelandic National League of North America. Formed in 1919 by a group of charismatic and proud individuals, this association has endured throughout the years, which have been spent enriching the cultural lives of many. Originating from a main chapter based in Winnipeg, the organization has spread across the U.S. and Canada, establishing local chapters that have attracted thousands of people over the years – promoting heritage and good citizenship.

The League was founded as a result of meetings held in Winnipeg March 25-27, 1919. At the first meeting, discussions were held to determine what issues should be of paramount concern. Certain goals and projects would be established that would realize the dual objectives of heritage preservation and community development.

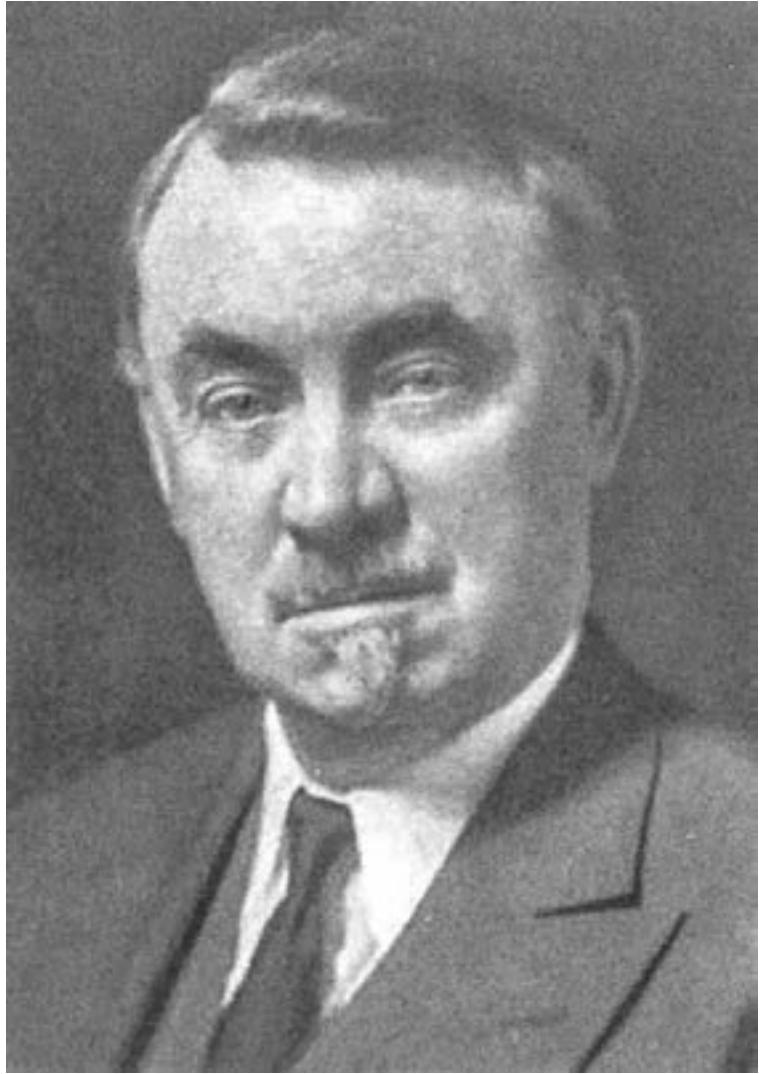


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE INL HISTORY BOOK

Rev. Rögnvaldur Pétursson, the first president of the Icelandic National League of North America

After further deliberation it was decided that the INL mission statement would be:

To encourage people of Icelandic descent to become the best possible citizens of their new homeland.

To maintain and strengthen the Icelandic language and literature in North America. To work in co-operation with all Icelanders on both sides of the Atlantic.

It was decided that the annual

membership fee would be \$2 for adults and 25 cents for those under the age of 18. One of the main concerns and projects the INL felt was of utmost importance in their first year was establishing language classes to ensure that children would retain their ancestral tongue, and that its use would not die out in North America.

Another important project was the annual publication of the periodical *Timarit*, which would describe the work of the INL, as well as outline its accomplishments for each year. It would include advertising space for business people.

Every member of the organization was encouraged to buy a copy, which at the time sold for \$1. This publication also featured poetry, short stories, and information about what was happening in various places. It was a great asset to the larger Icelandic community. The first President and co-founder of the organization, Séra Rögnvaldur Pétursson, was a man whose vision and dreams helped the association flourish. From the founding moments of the INL a great entity was created and it has continued to be an integral part of Icelandic heritage in North America.

First Annual Convention of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi 1919

North America to maintain the Icelandic language

Annual conventions in an organization such as the Icelandic National League of North America were – and to this day remain – an integral part of their operations for the year and an overview of all work accomplished each year. Although it is an obvious statement that meeting procedures can be tedious and dry, it is of critical importance to chronicle the conventions in the early years very closely, especially the first two operating years of the organization. Not only does it help us to gain an understanding of some of the charismatic individuals involved in these procedures, but it allows us as readers to view from the sidelines the structural and decision making tactics of this budding and growing organization. The first two conventions are imperative to the history of the Icelandic National League of North America and need to be viewed with an attentive eye.

The first annual convention of *Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi* was held in Winnipeg from February 25-27, 1919. Attendance was low from the Icelandic settlements, mostly because of illness (the Spanish Flu epidemic) at the time as well as poor advertising outside of the city. The event was convened on Feb. 25, 1919, at noon with the reading of Psalm number 619. The special guest for the convention, Séra Kjartan Helgason from Árnessýsla in southwest Iceland, the representative for the Icelandic league in Reykjavík, unfortunately had to leave the convention early due to undisclosed circumstances.

The first item of business was to read the message from Iceland, which was done by secretary Dr. Sigurður Júlíus Jóhannesson. President Séra Rögnvaldur

Pétursson then set a date for the league's next meeting. The reading of official reports, a long address by the president and the distribution of the treasurer's report followed. People seemed pleased with the reports and the voting that took place. Everyone attending the convention was then registered by writing his or her name in the league's official record book. After this had been completed a committee was struck to co-ordinate the program and Finnur Johnson, Ó.S. Þorgeirsson, Stefán Einarsson, Ásgeir Ingimundarson Blöndahl, and Guðmundur Sigurjónsson were chosen. This committee then laid out the convention's agenda as follows:

- Review of the basic foundation laws
- Teaching of Icelandic and the distribution of books to be used in these teachings
- The League's Certificate
- Common Chapter Laws
- Icelandic Art in connection with the Convention
- Tímarit*
- Jón Sigurðsson Monument
- Formation of more Chapters
- Working together with the League in Iceland
- New Business

All of these matters were referred to the program committee and the first move was to appoint another committee for matters relating to Icelandic language teaching. Séra Jónas A. Sigurðsson, Séra Kjartan Helgason, J.J. Bíldfell, Gísli Jónsson and Hjálmar Gíslason were appointed to this committee. Unfortunately Séra Jónas A. Sigurðsson was leaving the convention that evening, so Séra Albert E. Kristjánsson took his place. The committee appointed for the gathering and collecting of Icelandic art was comprised of Guðmundur Sigurjónsson, Einar P. Jónsson, Stefán Einarsson, and Ásgeir

Ingimundarson Blöndahl. The members of the committee for reviewing the league's basic foundation laws were Arngrímur Johnson, Stefan Einarsson, and Ásgeir Ingimundarson Blöndahl. The selection of this committee brought an end to the day's events and the convention was to be resumed the following day. That evening Séra Jónas A. Sigurðsson conducted lively entertainment and discussions about the importance of maintaining and learning the Icelandic language in North America.

The following day business was resumed at 2:30 p.m. The main matter of discussion for this day was the erection of a monument to honour the memory of the great Icelandic nationalist Jon Sigurðsson. It was thought that Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi was the best organization to get this accomplished. At the close of this discussion Árne Eggertsson proposed that there be another meeting for the officials in charge of the Jón Sigurðsson monument. They needed to discuss where the monument could be placed in the city so that it would be accessible for all to enjoy. The majority of the people voting at the convention agreed upon this proposal. Next came elections for the executive committee of the league. Elected were Séra Rðgnvaldur Pétursson as President, Jón Jónsson Bíldfell as Vice-President, Sigurður Júlíus Jóhannesson as Secretary, Ásgeir Ingimundarson Blöndahl as Vice-Secretary, Gísli Jónsson as Financial Secretary, Stefán Einarsson as Vice Financial Secretary and Ásmundur P. Jóhannsson as Treasurer. Séra Albert E. Kristjánsson was chosen as Vice-Treasurer and Finnur Johnson was elected as the league's Historical Archivist. Also chosen were two financial overseers for the league, Einar Páll Jónsson and Sveinbjörn Árnason. Once all the official business and elections had come to a close for the day, the crowd settled in for some tremendous

entertainment supplied by the Winnipeg chapter, Frón, under the supervision of that chapter's President, Árni Eggertsson. Most of the people in attendance were, of course, of Icelandic background. Séra Kjartan Helgason from Reykjavík, Iceland, then came forward with a speech about price increases and inflation. *Tímarit* reported that in the general opinion of the crowd he had a very good voice and expertise in the topic on which he was speaking.

At three o'clock in the afternoon on Feb. 27, the third meeting of the league was held. Discussions encompassed the paying of service bills that the league owed, and the programs organized for teaching Icelandic. A few important matters were put forward to outline plans for teaching Icelandic.

Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi advocated for a teaching position to be established at the University of Manitoba for Icelandic and Norse Studies. This was to be accomplished by sending out letters to all of the Icelandic communities across North America to seek support for this initiative.

It was put forth that each current chapter of the league, as well as chapters that would come into existence in the near future, hire instructors to teach Icelandic in those communities to make sure that our ancestral language did not die out in the New World. Plans were made for two instructors to be hired in Winnipeg by the home chapter, Frón.

The committee in charge of the teaching programs was asked to look after getting children's textbooks in Icelandic. Most preferable would be the spellers and readers by Eiríkur Briem and Laufey Vilhjálmisdóttir, available in three volumes.

It was determined that this committee needed to acquire these books so that the classes could get under way. This new initiative would encourage other chapters

to start their own teaching projects.

The next item on the agenda was *Tímarit* and a five-member committee was appointed to look after publication of the periodical. This committee consisted of Jón Jónsson Bíldfell, Gísli Jónsson, Séra Albert E. Kristjánsson, Hjálmar Gíslason and Séra Kjartan Helgason of Iceland. They determined that *Tímarit* should be published once a year, no later than November. This was agreed upon by the committee and brought forward to the executive officers who also approved of this proposal.

The next point was a proposition that it should be an important aspect of the league to promote and preserve Icelandic art and culture in North America. It was determined that some important Icelandic cultural events and art were Icelandic singing, such as choirs and musical groups, glíma wrestling, and Icelandic drama, which would be very popular during winter festivals and at the future League conventions. A small committee consisting of Guðmundur Sigurjónsson, Einar Páll Jónsson, and Ólafur S. Thorgeirsson was selected. Following these proposals came an overview of the basic chapter laws and rules, which were agreed upon by the executive committee.

At eight o'clock, Séra Rögnvaldur Pétursson, president of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi, gave a lecture about patriotism and his concerns about making sure that the Icelandic language be preserved in this new land. Other speeches by various members of the league followed. The Vice-President thanked everyone for attending the convention and this gave way to a speech by Séra Kjartan Helgason about Icelandic heritage and literature. Professor Skúli Johnson from the University of Manitoba was thanked with much gratitude for his work in establishing an Icelandic department at

the University, where Icelandic language and history could be taught and greatly strengthen the cultural fabric in North America. Following these proceedings a proposal was made to elect Séra Kjartan Helgason as the first honorary member of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi. This would become a very honoured tradition throughout the league's rich history.

Finally topics were suggested for expanding the league and creating more chapters across the continent. This raised far too many discussions, and finally it was agreed by the executive committee to grant funds in the amount of \$200 to support this project for the year 1920. These discussions closed a very successful first annual convention of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi.

Second Annual Convention of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi 1920

The second annual convention of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi was held on the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd of February in the year 1920. The conference was held in the Good Templars Hall in Winnipeg, and called to order by the league president Rögnvaldur Pétursson at two o'clock in the afternoon on the 21st. The first thing on the agenda was the recitation of the Psalm, *Ó blessa Guð, vort feðrafrón*, which was followed by an address by Séra Albert E. Kristjánsson, Member of the Manitoba Legislature representing the Constituency of St. George followed by the reading of announcements from the league Secretary Sigurður Júlíus Jóhannesson. Following that was the president's report. Rev. Pétursson gave his views on various projects that had been started and projects that needed to be completed.

At the convention the previous year it was stated that one of the goals of the Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi would be to start establishing Icelandic classes to make sure that children of Icelandic descent in North America

would continue learning Icelandic so the language would be retained for the future. Steps were made to hire instructors, obtain reading material and texts books and secure a permanent place where lessons could be taught. This year the home chapter Frón in Winnipeg has began teaching Icelandic once a week in the Good Templars Hall and a lot of gratitude must be given to the Good Templars for offering their building for this purpose. A report from Vice-Secretary Ásgeir Ingimundarson Blöndahl based in Wynyard, Saskatchewan said that a school has been established there as well thanks to the Immanuel congregation and its minister for the free loan on the church for holding the Icelandic classes. *Tímarit* was printed before the convention and this was thanks to Ásmundur P. Jóhannsson and Gísli Jónsson.

League expansion was of great importance this year and members from the executive in Winnipeg were sent out into the Icelandic districts to raise some interest as well as to sell the publication *Tímarit*. The Financial Secretary gave a report on

the fruit of the expansion committee's labour, stating that at the beginning of 1920 there were 420 members in Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi and later in the fall that number had risen to 570 and at the close of the year right prior to the second annual convention that number had risen to 700 people. This was proof that working at the issue of expanding the league was paying off and was making Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi an even stronger and more relevant organization. The league's archivist Finnur Johnson read his report. He stated that over 900 copies of *Tímarit* had already been sold out in the Icelandic North American communities on top of what had already been sold overseas to Iceland.

Following this came a treasurer's report from Ásmundur P. Jóhannsson. From this it was determined that the Icelandic National Leagues' finances were in good order at this time it was stated by incontestable evidence from the whole of the Convention's attendees that the treasurer had been doing a very excellent job of managing the finances. After this report this issue arose of attracting more people willing to work for the INL and Rev. Guðmundur Árnason delivered an oral report on this issue. He claimed that after travelling around the Narrows and Lundar Icelandic settlement over a 20-day period he had found 100 new people willing to do work for the INL. These workers were however more relied on for minor work and would view the INL's activities from the side. Rev. Guðmundur was thanked for his work and his report was accepted as dictated. After some minor contestation about the schedule that the convention would follow, Rev. Guðmundur Árnason, Ásgeir Í Blöndahl and Gísli Jónsson put forward a proposal that the schedule remain unchanged and the elections continue on at 3 o'clock as scheduled. Following these minor discrepancies, the issue was raised that despite efforts, the secretary had not

been able to find the key to the league's Post Office box. Another request was the secretary should be the one who writes all of the letters for the INL, as the President had been doing it up to this point, a request that had not been supported by the Executive Committee. After deliberation over these issues a panel of three men were chosen to look at these complaints in a more thorough light. They were Arngrímur Jónsson, Björn Pétursson and Ásgeir Í. Blöndahl.

At eight o'clock on the first day of the convention everyone in attendance gathered in the main meeting room where President Rögnvaldur Pétursson gave a lecture on Icelandic verse and proverbs. After this lecture was finished arose the matter of the Jón Sigurðsson statue that the INL was planning to erect in Winnipeg to honour the man who fought for Iceland's independence and in turn became the nation's first President. President Rev. Rögnvaldur Pétursson read out a letter from the Monument Committee. It was brought to everybody's attention after reading this letter that the committee had originally consisted of 15 men but had now dwindled to nine. The chairman of this project Árni Eggertsson, President of the Frón chapter, stated that he had acquired a foot terrace for the statue from the Icelandic artist Einar Jónsson. Mr. Eggertsson stated that everything was in place to continue; all that was needed was approval from Manitoba's government before this statue could be erected on the legislative grounds. The matter of the Jón Sigurðsson statue was tabled and the matter was to be looked at again on Wednesday when the provincial approval could be supplied.

The following day on the 22nd, a meeting was held at 2:20. After the minutes had been read and adopted the issue came to light that people felt the executive committee had not accomplished the work that they were responsible for completing.

Some people present felt that elections should take place immediately to deal with changing the executive because of its lack of productivity. Strong complaints and opinions were than raised and it was determined that elections would be postponed. One of the most important issues since the founding of the INL in the previous year was what a great emphasis everybody felt there should be on making sure that the Icelandic language would not die out in North America and the plan to hold Icelandic classes throughout Icelandic communities across North America. Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson was one of the first people to bring up discussions on this issue. Rev. Jónas spoke to the Head of the Jón Bjarnason Academy in Winnipeg that was first to start on these lectures of the Icelandic Language. Some people even wanted to see the Jón Bjarnason Academy come under the authority Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi while others felt it would be better to have the league support private lessons set up in homes throughout the Icelandic communities. To deal with this issue was set a five-man committee consisting of Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson, Jón J. Bildfell, Friðrik Guðmundsson, Ásgeir I. Blöndahl, and Gísli Jónsson.

Following these matters of importance came time for elections of a new Executive Officers for the year, at the suggestion of the current President Rev. Rögnvaldur Pétursson and Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson. After the voting windows had been closed and all ballots were passed, the results could be revealed. Rev. Rögnvaldur Pétursson had been appointed as president but declined his position and therefore the position of President was filled by Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson. After this position had been filled the position of Vice-President was considered. Many people were considered for this position but they all declined the nomination. A lot of deliberation followed,

and since it was already becoming late in the evening it was decided that elections would be ended and resume on the following day.

That evening a big social evening was held and hosted by the home chapter Frón with Master of Ceremonies Frón Chapter President Páll S. Pálsson. With about 500 people in attendance it was an evening of great merriment. Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson, the newly elected President had a long and stimulating lecture on the Icelandic language. Mrs. Stefanía Guðmundsdóttir and her acting group performed the Icelandic poetic play *Sumargleðin* by Guðmundur Guðmundsson and Professor Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson played the song *Rapsódía* without accompaniment, and Mrs. P.S. Dahlmann sang two songs by the Professor. After these performances were complete, Icelandic poetry by the Rocky Mountain Poet Stephan G. Stephansson was read at the request of the Executive Committee. Chosen was the poem *Goðorðsmaðurinn* taken from *Andvökur IV*.

After the poetry was read Professor S.K. Hall, Miss Nina Paulson, Mr. and Mrs. Alex Johnson and Björn Bjarnason played music. Hospitality by the hosting party Frón was very generous and dancing lasted long past midnight. The brothers Einar P. and Gísli Jonsson entertained with poetry and songs but were then handed the unfortunate news that their father had just passed away leaving everyone in attendance to express their sincerest condolences. An enjoyable evening was held by all with the exception of the bad news for the Jónsson brothers.

The first meeting on the final day of the convention on the 23rd of February was held at 10 o'clock in the morning. The first issue that was discussed the need to expand the Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi throughout other Icelandic communities outside of Winnipeg and across North America. Many different

viewpoints and proposals for expansion of the organization were put forward. It was decided that it would be very important to send representatives out into the Icelandic communities throughout the region to gain interest in Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi, and attract communities to start up their own chapters of the league. Some members proposed that membership fees should be higher and that *Tímarit* should be available to all members. It was decided that a separate committee would be chosen to work exclusively on this expansion project and work alongside the Executive Committee. Appointed to this committee at the recommendation of the Executive Committee were Árni Eggertsson, A.S. Bardal and J. Húnfjörð. Following these discussions came the matter of the distribution of *Tímarit*, Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi's annual periodical. A subcommittee was chosen to handle the distribution of *Tímarit* which consisted of Gunnlaugur Tr. Jónsson, Asgeir I. Blöndahl and Ásmundur P. Jóhannsson. The executive committee decided that all copies of *Tímarit* would remain free of charge to members of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi.

One matter that remained of critical importance to the founding members of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi was the co-operation between Icelanders in Iceland and Icelanders in North America in the promotion and strengthening of Icelandic heritage and language. A committee was established for furthering the co-operation with the league of Icelanders in Reykjavík and consisted of Árni Eggertsson, Sigurður Júlíus Jóhannesson, Rev. Rögnvaldur Pétursson, Finnur Johnson, and Björn Pétursson. This committee came to the following conclusions:

Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi looks for ways to best

cooperate with the League of Icelanders in Reykjavík, and that desirable members of the North American League should be sent to Iceland on business.

Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi wants to encourage Icelandic students in North America travel to the University of Iceland to study in the Icelandic language and increase their knowledge of their ancestral country.

Árni Eggertsson once again raised the Jón Sigurðsson statue project. He reported that the Manitoba government had granted permission to erect a statue of Jón Sigurðsson on the legislative grounds and it was decided by Árni to hold another meeting in March regarding this project to keep the ball rolling.

The continuation of the elections that had been started the previous evening was resumed. Elected to the Executive Committee of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi for 1920-21 were as follows:

President Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson
(elected the previous evening)

Vice-President Jón J. Bildfell

Secretary Gísli Jónsson

Vice-Secretary Ásgeir I. Blöndahl

Financial Secretary Fred Swanson

Vice-Financial Secretary Páll S. Pálsson

Treasurer Ásmundur P. Jóhannsson

Vice-Treasurer Ólafur Bjarnason

Archivist Finnur Johnson

Overseers of the League Björn Pétursson and Friðrik Guðmundsson

Following the conclusion of the election, newly elected President Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson took the Chair and gave a short speech, which was greeted with resounding applause. Ásgeir I. Blöndahl presented an offer from the chapter "Fjallkonan" in Wynyard, Saskatchewan to host the annual convention for the following year. This invitation was read and appreciated by the Executive Committee but nothing was decided.

That evening came another night of merriment and celebration at the Hall of the Good Templars. The main theme of the evening of celebration was the life of Rev. Matthías Jochumsson, chaired by the newly elected Vice-President Jón J. Bíldfell. The evening commenced with the Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson singing Iceland's national anthem, *Ó Guð Vars Lands* at the request of President Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson. Rev. Jónas A. Sigurðsson spoke at length about Séra Matthías Jochumsson, remembering his writings, his influence on Icelandic literature, his personal acquaintanceship with the poet, his versatility and charm. The president claimed that Séra Jochumsson had one of the nicest voices he had ever heard. After this Secretary Gísli Jónsson recited two of the poet's poems in tribute to him, "Í Hróarskeldudómkirkju" and "Bragamál". Then Dr. Sigurður Júlíus Jóhannesson

stated: "He placed great emphasis on a mournful poem by the poet with a message of liberalism and love and brotherhood to all men."

At the conclusion of the convention were the announcements of the honorary members that would be inducted that year. Chosen were the poet, Stephan G. Stephansson of Markerville, Alberta, the famous Arctic Explorer, Vilhjálmur Stefánsson, Professor Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson, Professor Halldór Hermannsson and Mrs. Stefanía Guðmundsdóttir. The President and the Vice-President were graciously thanked for their role in the success of the Convention, and the second annual convention of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi was closed with the singing of *Eld Gamla Ísafold*.

- *Tímarit 1920-21*

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A Year of Anniversaries: INL Iceland at 80

by Hjalmar W. Hannesson

The stories of the Icelandic settlers to North America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and those of their descendants, are full of references to their love of reading and writing. They brought their precious literature with them and among their first common activities was publishing newspapers, periodicals and books. The traditions of Icelandic literature were continued, and for a while there were even more books published in Icelandic in Winnipeg than in Reykjavík. I was very impressed by the *Icelandic Canadian* when my wife Anna Birgis and I arrived in Ottawa early in 2001, to open the first Icelandic Embassy in Canada; and when asked to write an editorial I responded enthusiastically (Vol. 57 #1, 2002). *Lögberg-Heimskringla* continues to be interesting and entertaining, and the *Icelandic Canadian* has become the *Icelandic Connection*, reflecting the fact that people of Icelandic descent in North America are both sides of the “lína” – or the border line. And I know for a fact that my wife Anna loved writing her article “Icelandic Women and the Right to Vote” for Vol. 68#2 (2016).

And here I “go again” – having been asked by Elva Simundsson, to write a few words about the INL Iceland where I have served as President for the last two years. As you read this, I am, since

28 February, past President, and as such still on the Board of the INL Iceland. My involvement began in the summer of 2000 and who knows when it ends! “Enginn veit sína ævina fyrr en öll er (*One does not know one’s life till the end*).” My successor is Hulda Karen Danielsdóttir, the first woman to become President of the INL Iceland. It was about time!

The Beginning

It is my privilege and pleasure to write a few words about the Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga, the Iceland National League Iceland, or INL Iceland for short. It was formally established in the Eimskip building in downtown Reykjavík on the first day of December, 1939, and therefore celebrates its 80th anniversary this year. An informal society had been in existence a few years prior to this formal beginning.

The aim of the INL Iceland was, and has always been, to strengthen relations and cooperation between the East and West Icelanders, as was written in 1939. The sister organization, now called Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Norður Ameríku, the Icelandic National League of North America, or INL NA, was established 20 years earlier and is therefore celebrating a century of activities with the same aim of maintaining the bonds



Hjálmar Hannesson with INL of NA President Bev Arason Gaudet, Past President Sunna Furstenau and Chair of the Snorri Program, Halldór Árnason

between people of Icelandic descent in North America and the old country. The INL Iceland is organizing a trip to Winnipeg in May where the INL NA will celebrate its 100th anniversary.

After the second world war and during the succeeding decades, INL Iceland experienced a great deal of success. With the advent of greater access to flights for the general public, many group and individual visits from Iceland to the Icelandic settlements, especially in Canada, in particular to Manitoba, took place; as well as trips of Western Icelanders to Iceland. Articles and books were published and other matters of mutual interest were attended to. Thus, the uniquely close relationship over the North Atlantic was maintained. Two Icelandic leaders, Prime Minister Bjarni Benediktsson in 1964 and President Ásgeir Ásgeirsson in 1967, became the first in their high positions to deliver the main speeches at the Íslendingadagurinn

in Gimli and a group of 130 Western Icelanders travelled to Iceland in 1968.

The President of INL Iceland for many years, Sigurður Sigurgeirsson and his wife Pálína, were the guests of the INL NA in 1968 and travelled far and wide, visiting many Icelandic settlements. Sigurður gave the main speech at Íslendingadagurinn. Interestingly, for many years he collected speeches, songs and greetings on tapes in Iceland, that were consequently played at gatherings of people of Icelandic descent in North America, especially at annual INL NA meetings. In the 1980s, then President of INL Iceland, Ásgrímur Jónasson, also successfully strengthened valuable bonds with Western Icelanders. I just mention those two leaders of INL Iceland out of several who were very active in promoting the Icelandic relations across the Atlantic. And there were many writers and scholars, such as Dr. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, who studied and wrote about the Icelandic emigrants



Hjalmar Hannesson addressing the gathering at Mountain, ND

and their descendants in North America.

Easier Access – More Frequent Visits

Obviously, technology and the times have changed drastically during the eighty years of INL Iceland, direct flights between Iceland and many North American cities being just one. Icelandic Presidents Kristján Eldjárn, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir and Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson all visited INL NA areas, as has President Guðni Th. Jóhannesson – informally, having married Eliza Reid of Ontario. He will take part in the 100th Anniversary of the INL NA in Winnipeg.

Many Icelandic Ministers and other leaders from Iceland have visited throughout the past years, Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir being the latest one last summer. Icelandic priests often used to serve in some Icelandic areas.

This year we also celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of a professional Consulate General in Winnipeg in 1999 when Svavar Gestsson opened its doors. That event and the opening of the Embassy of Iceland to Canada in Ottawa in 2001, as well as the Canadian Embassy in Reykjavík, are all milestones in our relationship, helping to strengthen and maintain it. The US Embassy in Reykjavík, the Icelandic Embassy in Washington, DC, and the Consulate General of Iceland in New York have served in the same way for decades.

The Department of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba and the cooperation between it and the University of Iceland, as well as other academic cooperation across the Atlantic, has also been of great importance.

Revival In 1997

For a while, however, in the early 1990s, the activities of INL Iceland were at a low ebb. But on the occasion of Leifur Eiríksson Day, October 9, 1997, the INL Iceland was formally resurrected with the assistance of the Icelandic Government of that time, undoubtedly with the celebrations in the year 2000 in the back of their minds. Volunteers for the cause on both sides of the Atlantic have never looked back, and the activities have been blooming ever since. A true renaissance took place. INL Iceland's Presidents have been: Steinn Logi Björnsson 1997-1999, Markús Örn Antonsson 1999-2003, Almar Grímsson 2003-2011, Halldór Árnason 2011-2017, Hjálmar W. Hannesson 2017-2019 and now Hulda Karen Daníelsdóttir 2019 -.

In accordance with the original aims of the INL Iceland, a priority has always been to connect new generations of Icelanders and young descendants of the Icelandic settlers in North America, with the aim of strengthening and maintaining the Icelandic heritage. This has been done in close cooperation with the INL NA and with the support of Icelandic Governments. Indispensable support has also been received from the approximately 30 Icelandic societies in North America, from memorial funds and not to forget the diligent volunteers on both side of the Atlantic.

The INL of Iceland holds many events each year, and I shall not dwell on them here. Informative lectures and shows are held regularly on various subjects relating to matters of people of Icelandic descent in North America. A highlight each year is the annual INL Iceland Convention held in Reykjavík in August, a day after the Cultural Night in our capital. Usually about 200 people attend and enjoy a program both entertaining

and informative. INL Iceland's web page is www.inl.is

The Snorri Program

As usual, the Snorri Programs are key items of INL Iceland yearly activities. The original Snorri Program, for young people of Icelandic descent from North America to come to Iceland and stay for 6 weeks, is now in its twentieth year. Since the inception of the Snorri Program, it has grown in scope, adding the Snorri West Program for young Icelanders to tour Icelandic settlement areas in North America; the Snorri Plus Program, for groups of adult Western Icelanders travelling to Iceland; the Snorri Internship Program, where young Western Icelanders stay and work in Iceland for whole summers, for example at Hofsó; and finally the new Snorri Deaf Program, wherein exchange visits of deaf people from Iceland and deaf descendants of Icelanders in North America take place.

We owe much gratitude to Almar Grímsson and the others who with him had the vision and brilliant idea of the innovative Snorri Programs, creating the necessary link to the participation of young people in the life cycle of the INL NA and INL Iceland. The cycle has thus, in a way, become self-sustainable; and today Snorri participants are in increasing numbers getting involved in the work of the various INL societies, clubs and chapters, and taking on ever more responsibilities. Almar wrote an editorial for the *Icelandic Connection*, in 2011 where he describes "the simple but brilliant idea" of the Snorri Program. Ms. Ásta Sól Kristjánsdóttir was employed by the Snorri Fund as director of the Snorri Program from its inception until this year.

Formal Agreement

In May of 2017, the INL NA and INL Iceland signed a formal agreement in which

they formalized their long-standing roles as sister organizations. In the agreement they promise to continue working together to develop, maintain and secure funding for programs of priority including the Snorri Programs; the so-called International Visits Program; and mutual visits with emphasis on Icelandic heritage and connecting relatives on both sides of the Atlantic. Two representatives of INL NA sit on the INL Iceland Board. They are now Jól Friðfinnsson from Manitoba and Sunna Furstenau from North Dakota.

The Future

INL Iceland has about 500 active members, publishes an electronic newsletter, takes part in the INL NA annual meetings, as well as the festivals in Mountain, North Dakota, and Gimli, Manitoba; and gives advice to numerous friends and visitors of Icelandic descent from North America every year. Membership dues are the main revenue source, but government support through the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs is also of paramount importance, as is the support of Icelandair. For this and other



Hjálmar Hannesson with Icelandic Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir at Mountain, ND

support, the INL Iceland is most grateful.

Through the participation of the wonderful “Snorris” we all have reason to be optimistic about the cause of maintaining the bonds of Icelandic cultural heritage across the Atlantic.

Our very best wishes to the *Icelandic Connection* and all its readers.

Hjálmar W. Hannesson



The Icelandic National League Coat of Arms

Granted by the Canadian Heraldic Authority
Ottawa, January 1, 2000

The Icelandic National League of North America's coat of arms is comprised of five elements:

The Shield: which is blue in colour bears a white falcon, a very old, nonpolitical symbol of Iceland which was used for centuries and is said to have been granted to Loftur Guttormsson 'the Rich' (1375-1432), an Icelandic knight from whom all contemporary people of Icelandic descent are descended. The white falcon was the symbol of choice used by the Icelanders who first came to North America and a blue banner displaying

the white falcon was paraded through the streets of Milwaukee by Icelanders celebrating the millennium of Iceland's settlement in 1874. Iceland did not have its current flag at the time most of our ancestors emigrated, and the flag is thus more symbolic of modern Iceland. On the breast of the falcon is an open book, symbolic of our literary heritage which includes the sagas and a rich tradition of poetry, history, genealogy, and literacy. Framing the shield is a white border with a red band, which at each of the three corners forms a maple leaf.

The Helm: or armorial helmet displayed above the shield is a standard traditional heraldic device.

The Mantling: is the decorative display of ribbons descending from the helm. This, too, is a standard heraldic device, but in this case the colours red, white, and blue have special significance.

The Crest: rising from the helm consists of a Norse longship (Iceland was settled by Norsemen, only a few on whom qualified as 'Vikings'. Norse was their race, whereas 'Viking' was an occupation not unlike that of 'Pirate'. Most Norsemen were not, in fact, 'Vikings', but rather traders, farmers, etc.) The longship displays both the Pagan dragon prow and a Christian cross, as both Pagan and Christian traditions were important aspects of our heritage. Rising from the longship is the World Ash, 'Yggdrasil', a motif from Norse mythology, which with its roots shown in the Celtic interlacing pattern represents both the Norse and Celtic racial and cultural origins of all Icelandic people. The tree also signifies the 'family tree' and the bonds of kinship shared by all people of Icelandic descent.

The green leaves also symbolize growth and renewal, at the same time suggesting the spring leaves alluded to in 'Vísur Íslendinga', the famous Icelandic poem and song by Jónas Hallgrímsson once sung whenever Icelanders came together and still strongly associated with reunion and fellowship.

The Motto: displayed on the banner beneath the shield reads 'Römm Er Sú Taug', meaning 'Strong Is The Bond'. This phrase was made familiar in 'New Iceland' by the poet Friðrik Sigurðsson, who chose this as the title of his anthology of poetry, and it is a fitting sentiment for our organization.

This coat of arms was developed jointly by the Icelandic National League and the Canadian Heraldic Authority over a six year period, from 1994 to 2000. A simplified line drawing has also been commissioned for small formats such as letterhead, pins, etc. Elements from the coat of arms can be used separately in appropriate situations.

Written approval from the Icelandic National League must be obtained for all commercial uses and applications.

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History of INLNA in the USA

by Sunna Olafson Furstenau, Past President INLNA

In 1919, there were 35 charter members of the INL (Þjóðræknisféla Íslendinga í Vesturheimi) who lived in the USA. 33 of them lived in North Dakota. A total of 420 members from North America are listed in the 1920 convention notes. At this time, all memberships were for individuals. A few United States clubs started joining in the 1980s but it was on and off again memberships until the mid-1990s. The states who have been with the INLNA the longest are organizations in North Dakota, Minnesota, and Washington. These three all border Canada and have the strongest connections with the INLNA. These clubs frequently host visitors from Iceland and host the Snorri West participants from Iceland.

Dr. Richard Beck was the first president of the INLNA who lived in the USA. He was born in 1897 at the farm called Svínaskálastekk, along the Reyðarfjörð, in east Iceland. He and his mother emigrated to Canada in 1921. He left Canada and moved to the USA in 1922 to become a student. He graduated from Cornell University in New York in 1926. He was a professor at St. Olaf College in Minnesota for two years followed by one year at Thiel College in Pennsylvania. In 1929, he was hired at the University of North Dakota and retired in 1967 after 38 years at UND. He was the head of the department of modern and classical languages at the University of North Dakota for nine years. During his

UND tenure, he published fifteen books and more than five hundred articles. He retired and moved to Victoria, BC in 1967. He died there in 1980. Dr. Beck served as INL President from 1940-1945 and again from 1956-1962. He was the second longest serving president of the INL.

Claire Eckley (2014-2016) was born in 1941 in Minnesota. She served on the INLNA Board of Directors for many years. Joined the INLNA in about 2000 as the President of the Minnesota Hekla Club. She was the second president from the United States and is currently the president of the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota.

Sunna Olafson Furstenau was born in 1960 in North Dakota. She served since 2010 on the INLNA Board of Directors and was the president from 2016-2018. She is currently serving as the past president of the INLNA, North American Director of Snorri Deaf, Social Media, and INLNA 100 Tour to Iceland.

INLNA Conventions held in the USA

- 2002 in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 2012 in Seattle, Washington
- 2015 in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 2017 in Grand Forks, North Dakota

The current and recent full member clubs in the USA are:

- Blaine Icelandic Heritage Society in Washington

- The Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle in Washington
- Icelandic Association of Washington, DC
- Icelandic American Association of Minnesota
- Icelandic Communities Association of Northeast North Dakota
- Icelandic Online Club based in Austin, Texas
- The Icelandic Association of Utah

Associate and Affiliate Members are:

- Icelandic Hekla Club of Minnesota
- Fargo-Moorhead Icelandic Klub in North Dakota and Minnesota
- Icelandic Roots based in Fargo, North Dakota
- Manassas Viking Festival in Manassas, Virginia

7 individual members are from the USA

- Anna Bjarnadottir-Wahoske from Virginia
- Gay Strandemo from Wisconsin
- Heidi Herman-Kerr from South Dakota
- Jody Arman-Jones from Minnesota
- John Hofteig from Illinois
- Randall Willis from Tennessee

On the board of directors from the USA currently are:

- Angel Johnson-Nelson – Biographies from Texas
- Dianne O’Konski – Convention Chair and Calendars from Minnesota
- Erna Hákonardóttir Pomrenke – Membership Chair & Communications from Washington, DC
- Heidi Herman-Kerr – Youth & Culture Chair, INL Reads, Social Media, Communications from South Dakota
- Jody Arman-Jones – Snorri West Chair from Minnesota
- John Hofteig – Donations & Fundraising from Illinois

- Sunna Furstenu – Snorri Deaf Chair, INLNA 100 Tour to Iceland, Social Media, & Past President

Other committees with USA Directors and Members are:

The Donald K. Johnson Film Series and INL Reads: Rob Olason from Washington



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Reflections of an INLNA Past President

by Sunna Olafson Furstenau

It has been an honor and privilege to serve on the INLNA Board of Directors (2010-present) and as president (2016-2018). I joined the board under the leadership of Gail Einarson-McCleery from Toronto. She was an excellent mentor and friend during these past years with the INLNA. This same year, Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga asked me to join as the USA Representative.

Many interesting and fun projects have happened since 2010. I will highlight just a few of them where I was able to assist. The first was to set up a Facebook page and consistently post almost daily to gain a following. The page today has 7,300 people who like the page.

In 2011, the Icelandic Online Club with Angel Johnson-Nelson of Texas as the president, Gwen Mann, Anna Bjarnadóttir-Wahoske, and I formed the board of directors. This provided an online presence for those who did not live near an Icelandic club or wanted to connect more frequently online with others.

2012, the IVP program was flourishing under the leadership of Gail and she asked me to represent the INLNA. I traveled around Iceland for three weeks speaking of our Icelandic presence in North America. Discussions lately have included changing from an IVP or at least adding into the mix creative and educational online webinars.

During the next few years, I helped with various projects including a search on how charitable status in Canada would affect the USA member clubs, was

the main person working on Facebook presence, Snorri Programs, and traveling to connect with people in the various clubs. Zoom online video conferencing was implemented in committees.

The motto and inspiration for my presidency was from the INLNA crest, “Römm er sú taug.” – “Strong is the bond.” I believe this is one of the most important sayings we have in our three Icelandic countries of Iceland, Canada, and USA. The strength of our heritage, culture, and genealogy is unique. We have a very strong bond to Iceland wherever we live in the world.

Immediately after the 2016 AGM, Zoom conferencing began for all INLNA meetings. Instead of \$8,000 per year for Primus Canada Conferencing, paid for by Edmonton and Calgary, we paid less than \$200 CAD per year. We could communicate in real time, share our screens to work on documents, and see who was voting and paying attention. Board members were encouraged to come onto the call 30 minutes early so we could gather and get to know each other better as people. We started new President Meetings to encourage openness and transparency of the board plus increase communications with the member clubs.

We started a quarterly newsletter, Twitter, Vimeo, Instagram, and continued with our very popular Facebook page. There is a new online store thanks to Holly Ralph! Communication methods are changing drastically and we need to keep



Sunna Olafson Fustenau receives the Knight's Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon from President Guðni Th Jóhannesson

up. Making a commitment to innovative thinking and creative ideas will attract the next generation of bright talent to keep up the great work of those who have gone before us.

A handful of projects were supported with INLNA finances. It should be much more. Our goal was to become more charitable but many initiatives were met with resistance. This was a frustrating and illogical issue since INLNA bank accounts show a hefty sum of over \$100,000. We collected donations to send to Iceland at Christmas. Two of the years it was for new housing for abused women and children. A few other years it was for the 'Mother's Christmas Fund.' A youth and culture initiative was to allocate money for young

North Americans to attend conventions. Up to four convention fees are covered per year.

We thought the Calendar project led by Dianne O'Konski was in the final year for 2019. All the people who worked on it over the years – your work is very appreciated. This has been the #1 INLNA fundraiser for many years. Natalie Guttormsson came forward and has produced an Icelandic language calendar for 2020. It will be ready soon.

In 2016, the INLNA hired Harley Jonasson to help us achieve charitable status in Canada. This quest has been off and on since the 1970s. Harley's work was very valuable and appreciated. A committee led by Ashley Thorvaldson

of Ottawa worked through Harley's 59-page report and the items he outlined for needed changes. Ashley is close to sending in the application and we hope it will be successful.

2017 brought the INLNA convention to North Dakota. It was very fun for those who attended and a huge accomplishment for our little community. The ICA was able to give many thousands of dollars to local organizations and paid for the entire INLNA convention including all INLNA costs.

The Social Media Team increased awareness and apps. We gained more followers on the INLNA social media pages. The world has many distractions and people are busy. Social Media helps but it is not for everyone. It also does not bring people face to face and create personal connections. By using all methods available, we can reach the most people.

I traveled to most of the North America member clubs giving presentations and meeting with their members. Only Ottawa and Washington, DC remain as the two full member clubs yet to visit. In these 9 years, I have given over 70 presentations in 45 different locations as well as many radio/TV interviews and written many newspaper articles.

Another travel item has been planning the 100-year INLNA Anniversary Tour to Iceland in August 2019, which will be my 19th visit. Kent Lárus Björnsson has designed and will lead the Iceland tour for 50 people. It was sold out over 8 months before the trip. Everyone is so very excited for this opportunity to travel with others. Many will see Iceland for the first time.

In April of 2018, I was with a group of three other women interested in the Deaf community. We volunteered to give a half-day seminar to The Deaf Association in Iceland about our shared Icelandic history and stories. It was life changing for them

and for us. We started a program called Snorri Deaf and brought two deaf women plus one female interpreter from Iceland to Minnesota, North Dakota, and Manitoba. This summer of 2019, three people from the deaf community of Manitoba will be traveling to Iceland for a similar program.

In the fall of 2017, President Guðni Th. Jóhannesson presented me with the Knight's Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon for my work within our Icelandic communities in North America.

April of 2018, was a very busy work-only trip to Iceland. Four women counting me, all interested in the Deaf community, gave a half-day seminar to The Deaf Association in Iceland about our shared Icelandic history and stories. It was life changing for them and for us. We started a program called Snorri Deaf and brought two deaf women plus one female interpreter from Iceland to Minnesota, North Dakota, and Manitoba. This summer, three people from the deaf community of Manitoba will be traveling to Iceland for a similar program.

May of 2018 was the end of my presidency. There were so many tasks left undone and so many new initiatives that could have been started. There were successes and there were projects that stalled even with a lot of work. But all of us in the Iceland, Canada, and the USA working together, we will continue to preserve our heritage and honor our ancestors.

I developed criteria and the board approved a new INL award which can be given to someone who lives in Iceland, Canada, or the USA. "Römm er sú taug." – "Strong is the bond" is an award that honors international volunteerism to preserve and promote our shared Icelandic heritage and culture. Almar Grímsson will be the first recipient at the 100-year INLNA convention in Winnipeg.

Bev Arason Gaudet is the current president of the INLNA. It has been a pleasure to take a step back and be involved with just a few committees and helping Bev where possible.

In January of 2019, Bev brought forward a motion to allow the US to begin work on charitable status (called nonprofit status in the US). The INLNA Board voted in favor. This will be a separate legal entity with each paying their own costs and bringing in their own donations and revenue. The INLUS (Icelandic National League of the United States) will carry on the work for clubs in the US. North America is huge. It is spread out over 9.54 Million square miles / 24.71 Million square kilometers. Other than changes with the

board and finances, the clubs should not see any changes. Currently Snorri West, Snorri Deaf, Youth & Culture, INL Reads, and Convention Coordinator are carried out by USA board members. Both countries will continue collaborating on these important projects as well as the cooperation with INL Iceland.

There is much we can do to continue preserving our heritage in North America. We have accomplished much during the nine years in which I have been involved in building on the efforts of our ancestors and those who came before us. Let us celebrate these 100 years and look to the future with optimism and dedication. With new technologies and a renewed sense of ourselves, anything is possible.

What INLNA means to me

by Gwen Mann

I'm happy I grew up in a small town. Both my grandparents immigrated from Iceland to Churchbridge, Saskatchewan, home of the Thingvalla Icelandic Settlement (1886). This small town was a small "United Nations" of immigrant and second-generation new Canadians that had a very cooperative spirit. Everyone knew everyone and there was a genuine caring. Growing up there, I had lots of relatives. Actually if I did something wrong, my mother would know about it before I could get home. I would be reminded, "Remember who you

are". I was an Icelander.

After completing high school, I moved to Regina; I didn't know anyone. Successive moves took me to different locations, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Slave Lake, California and finally Calgary. In 1994, I joined the INLNA, through the Leif Eiriksson Icelandic Club and because of this Club I was on my way to Iceland in 1995. What a life changing experience that turned out to be. I saw the places my mother and grandparents were born. It was overwhelming to visit in the location where my grandmother was born and to

experience the feeling of being in these places where my forefathers and mothers had been. I was treated so royally by second cousins; I was chauffeured from relative to relative and from one cultural feature to the next tourist highlight.

Back home again, I started to become more involved with the Calgary Leif Eiriksson Club. The more involved, the more people I knew and my circle of friends expanded. Over the years these friends felt more like family, which no doubt is true. In 2000, I attended my first INLNA Convention in Gimli. What a delightful experience. I wanted to do that again. I was so fortunate to be able to attend nearly all the conventions since then, which meant that I became acquainted with “relatives” all over Canada and the US. There are more reunions and hugs than can be imagined.

In 2004, I offered to be INLNA Historian. This gave me the opportunity to work with members across the three countries. My first project was the INL calendars. Then the 90th Anniversary History Book. Here, I found out that, in 1919, the First Mission Statement of these Icelandic immigrants was: “To encourage people of Icelandic descent to become the best possible citizens of their new homeland”. Then I started working with the Biographies program



Gwen Mann INLNA 2012

that tells of the significant contributions of Icelanders. There are so many major contributions. They truly tried to be the best possible citizens, which brings me back to my youth experiences; living in an environment where you are to be your best, so even your mother only hears good things.

Within our Icelandic North American cultural community, being involved in the Icelandic National League, you get to know everyone and understand that everyone cares about the same things. It's like being back in the small town and with my family.

Publications of the Icelandic National League of North America

by Ingrid Roed and Elva Simundsson

In 1969, the 50th anniversary year of the founding of the Icelandic National League of North America, Dr. Richard Beck wrote an article on the League in which he drew attention to the importance of the League's involvement in publishing. The following is based on that article, published in Icelandic in the annual *Tímarit Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi* (Periodical of the Icelandic National League of North America).

Dr. Beck noted that the publishing output of the League had been diverse and of significant cultural value throughout its 50 years. In addition to providing financial support for the publishing of Icelandic materials in English, it also produced or provided funding for a number of Icelandic publications.

From 1934 to 1940, the Icelandic children's newspaper, *Baldursbrá*, edited by Dr. Sigurður Júlíus Johannsson, was published under the umbrella of the League. It featured poems and stories of interest to children and young adults as well as a good many 'letters to the editor' sent in by young readers. In its first issue, the editor stated its focus clearly, saying "*Lögberg* and *Heimskringla* are newspapers for grownups, but this is going to be your newspaper." Its primary purpose was to maintain a continued interest and participation in the Icelandic language among young people of Icelandic descent.

Þjóðaréttarstaða Íslands (Constitutional Rights of the Country of Iceland) was a book originally written by the Swedish author Dr. Ragnar Lundborg in 1934 and published in German. It was translated and serialized in *Tímarit* from 1936 to 1939 and then published by the INL separately as a single volume in 1940. It described the legal and constitutional authorities granted to Iceland as a sovereign country under the rule of the Danish Crown.

The five-volume series, *Saga Íslendinga í Vesturheimi* (History of Icelanders in North America), was another product of the Icelandic National League. It commenced publication in 1939, and its last volume was issued in 1953. The introduction to the first volume focuses on the culture of the Icelandic peoples and their incredible accomplishments in preserving their history. It makes the point that the preservation of the Sagas of Icelanders in North America is every bit as vital as the Sagas of Icelanders recorded in the medieval literature of Iceland.

The weekly Icelandic newspapers, *Lögberg* and *Heimskringla*, were not specifically publications of the Icelandic National League of North America, but they were regularly subsidized by contributions of funds from the INL and its members. These two newspapers were first published separately, but in 1959 they were amalgamated as *Lögberg-Heimskringla*.

They were vital in maintaining ties within the Icelandic North American cultural community as well as with the ancestral home country. Dr. Beck quoted from a speech made to honour Stefan Einarsson, on his retirement after 30 years as editor of *Heimskringla*:

“Our weekly papers have at one and the same time provided an outlet for Western Icelandic literary activity and a platform for disseminating news and maintaining bonds among Icelanders in North America, as well as serving as a bridge across the ocean to our homeland. The papers have kept interest in the Icelandic language and cultural heritage alive, and have increased their readers’ knowledge and understanding of their language and culture.

We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to all those who have had a part in editing these western Icelandic newspapers, for the important cultural and heritage preservation they have provided.”

Yet the most important of the Icelandic National League’s publishing activities was, according to Dr. Beck, its periodical, *Tímarit Þjóðræknisfélags Íslendinga í Vesturheimi*, which was marking its 50th anniversary along with the League. It preserved the story of the historical and cultural activities of the Icelanders in the West and served as a conduit for informing and educating people back in Iceland about the Icelandic community in North America. The magazine, he said, reflected “the history, cultural life and literary endeavours of Western Icelanders” and provided “a link between League members from east to west and was a tangible symbol of the League and its work.” The annual issues published the proceedings of the INL annual conventions along with scholarly essays, poetry and newsworthy articles on the lives and interests of people of Icelandic descent in North America.

By the 1960s, in spite of the best

efforts of the League, the Icelandic newspapers and *Tímarit*, English had taken over as the common language of the second and third generations of Icelandic North Americans. *Lögberg-Heimskringla* gradually transformed itself from an Icelandic-language paper to an English-language paper on Icelandic and Icelandic North American affairs. *Tímarit* ceased publication in 1969, leaving its mission of connecting people of Icelandic descent and preserving their cultural heritage through the publication of literary and scholarly articles to be carried on by *The Icelandic Canadian* journal, now appropriately renamed *The Icelandic Connection*.


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Snorris at Bessastaðir July 24, 2018

PHOTO: KENT LÁRUS BJÖRNSSON

Snorri West

Strengthening the Ties Between the United States, Canada and Iceland

by Jody Arman-Jones

Snorri Þorfinnsson is believed to be the first European born in North America, circa 1004 A.D., in a farmhouse in Vinland, now known as L'Anse aux Meadows, in Newfoundland, Canada. His parents, Þorfinnur Karlsefni and Guðriður Þorbjarnardóttir, were explorers, born in Iceland. It is from this pioneer child that the Snorri Programs take their name.

Like its sister programs, Snorri and Snorri Plus, the primary purpose of Snorri West is to strengthen the bonds between Icelandic descent in North America. The

program is organized and operated by the Icelandic National League of North America (INLNA), in cooperation with the Snorri Foundation in Iceland. The Snorri Program was begun in 1999 and is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2019. Two years later, 2001 marked the inaugural year of the Snorri West program, realizing one of the original aims of making the Snorri Programs reciprocal. Snorri West has grown and changed over the years, but to date, some 100 people have participated in it.



Welcome Snorris

Snorri West provides the opportunity for Icelandic young people ages 18 - 28 to follow the trails of ancestors who emigrated from Iceland to North America, discover the adopted countries, cultures, languages, stories, and nature, as well as explore the communities created by these intrepid travelers of the past. Meeting relatives and experiencing how Western Icelanders are keeping their Icelandic heritage alive in their communities are additional goals.

The program usually involves between two and six participants coming to North America for four weeks each summer. As with the Snorri Program, participants pay approximately half of the cost of the program, with host clubs and individuals generously donating money, time, activities, food, and accommodations. With the

exception of some paid support staff in Iceland, this is an entirely volunteer effort and would not be possible without all the many local coordinators and volunteers that do the planning and implement the day-to-day itinerary for the program – they are the heart of the program and what has made it so successful.

From its inception in 2001 until 2010 Snorri West visited Manitoba, Canada exclusively, under the direction of the United Icelandic Appeal with Wanda Anderson as Project Manager and assistance in Iceland from Ásta Sól Kristjánsdóttir.

In 2012, under the guidance of Gail Einarson-McCleery of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, the Icelandic National League of North America (INLNA) took on



Snorris L'Anse aux Meadows

the leadership and organizational roles for the Snorri West program, again with the assistance in Iceland of Ásta Sól Kristjánsdóttir. Jody Arman-Jones, Farmington, Minnesota, USA joined Gail in 2015 and took over leadership in the fall of 2016.

Due to the vast size of North America, for the purposes of the Snorri West program, the continent is now divided into four corridors – Central, Midwest, East Coast, and West Coast, with one corridor visited each summer. Highlight destinations of each corridor include:

East Coast

Washington, D.C., USA, and Canadian destinations of Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario, L'Anse aux Meadows,

Newfoundland and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Past visits 2014 and 2018; next anticipated visit 2022.

Central

Minneapolis, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA; the Icelandic Communities and Mountain, North Dakota, USA (including the Icelandic celebration *August the Deuce*); Gimli – the heart of the New Iceland Colony and home to *Íslendingadagurinn*, the Interlake region of Arborg, Riverton, and Hecla, as well as Brandon and Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Past visits 2012 and 2016; next anticipated visit in 2020.

Midwest

Salt Lake City and Spanish Fork,

Utah, USA; Edmonton, Markerville, Calgary and Drumheller, Alberta, Canada, as well as Saskatoon, Vatnabyggð area and Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Past visits 2013 and 2017; next anticipated visit in 2021.

Pacific Coast

Seattle, Point Roberts and Blaine, Washington, USA, as well as Vancouver, Victoria and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada. Past visit 2015; planned for 2019.

Depending upon timing, an attempt is made to celebrate Sautjándi júní in North America, Canada Day in Canada, and American Independence Day in the United States, along with attendance at local Icelandic celebrations. This year, four young women, Natalía Johannsdóttir, Karítas Pálsdóttir, Guðbjörg Halldórsdóttir and Oddrún Johannsdóttir, will arrive in

Vancouver on June 25, 2019, returning to Iceland on July 21 from Seattle.

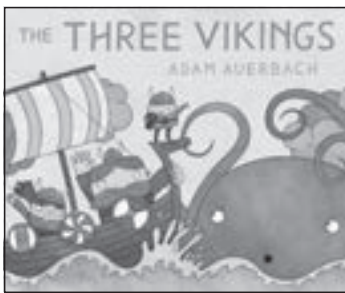
Over the last several years, an invaluable method of strengthening the ties has been through the Icelandic Roots database and its membership, which has provided invaluable support, access and information to those on both sides of the North Atlantic. In addition, an emphasis has been placed on connecting the Snorris and Snorri West participants through a series of joint activities in Iceland, hoping this will lead to stronger connections between individuals in the future. The photo above the title of this article is from the July 2018 joint trip to Bessastaðir to meet President Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, just prior to the commencement activities and the Snorris returning to North America.

For more information about Snorri West, please go to <http://www.snorri.is/snorri-west.html>.

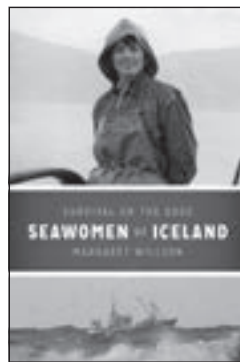
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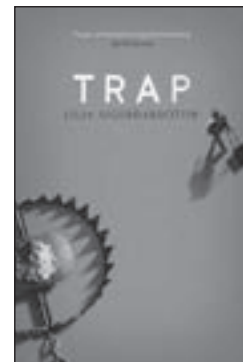
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PHOTO: AVERY SIMUNDSSON

Adam with Kida and Guðríður

Family and the Fjord: Notes on the journey of an Icelandic-Canadian's identity

by Adam Vignernon

“You’ll have to be a little patient – she’s not used to me telling her what to do.”

It’s a Thursday morning in the northern Icelandic town of Sauðárkrókur and the November sun is laboriously burning off the icy fog of morning. Sunlight

floods the last room down the hall of the Sauðárhæðum residence, spilling over an unlikely quartet standing amidst a century of memories. Intricate embroidery and fading photographs paper the walls of the impossibly detailed room, which ninety-



PHOTO: ADAM VIGNERON

Skagafjörð coast

seven year old Guðríður calls home. Her younger sister Kidda, a spritely ninety-one, is cajoling her sister to shuffle into the light in preparation for a family photograph. With just enough grumbling to remind Kidda of the birthright that every older sibling enjoys, Guðríður beckons to her cousin Avery and the three of them line up in front of my lens.

This moment is, in itself, a snapshot of our Icelandic experience. Avery is back to discover her roots, while as navigator, co-conspirator, and photographer, I'm lucky enough to be along for the ride.

Our story begins half a world away on the Canadian prairie, where a student conference in Winnipeg introduced me to an impossibly adventurous farm girl from Arborg, Manitoba. As our friendship grew, I

was delighted to learn of Avery's pride in her Icelandic roots and long-term plans to return for a visit. As a Ukrainian-Canadian with ties to my own ancestry, I resonated with Avery's passion and welcomed the chance to compare her family experience with my own.

Three academic degrees and a few lifetime chapters later, Avery called me: life had given her a chance to escape in late 2018, was I still interested? We leapt into action and established contact with cousin Sigga in Skagafjörður, a valley on the north coast home to some four thousand Icelanders. With a final check of the packing list and mutual reassurance that November would be a dandy month to travel north of sixty, we boarded our respective planes and struck off into the unknown.

Upon our arrival in Sauðárkrókur, we



PHOTO: ADAM VIGNERON

Goðafoss

are greeted with coffee and cake by the strikingly energetic Kidda. Sitting in her cozy kitchen in a century-old corrugated tin house in the town centre, we learn that Kidda will be our tour guide and translator. Thanks to an extended family sojourn in Australia some two decades ago, her command of English is unparalleled among her generation, affording us a unique window into decades of life on the fjord.

The next day is a whirlwind of farmhouses and family photo albums. Kidda is a tireless translator as Avery's relatives quiz her on all the usual topics ("We miss your father Bragi, how is he doing? Are you and your husband Carl enjoying your new house?") but over waffles, smoked salmon, and endless cups of coffee, we learn something new at each stop. Through these conversations, we begin to sense patterns

in the family: a pride in the honest work of farming, mixed with an adventurous streak in travel and business alike.

The vistas around the fjord are stunning in the sunshine. The treeless landscape reminds me of my own childhood on the Saskatchewan prairie, albeit with the snow-capped mountains providing a majestic substitute for towering cloud formations. The changing scenery prompts Kidda to share various glimpses of her childhood: the first years in a sod house in the next fjord; the harrowing move of all possessions and livestock through the mountain pass above town; and the excitement and nerves that accompanied her to both the big city of Reykjavik at the tender age of sixteen and to the faraway land of Australia with her young family.

The stories continue during our evening



PHOTO: ADAM VIGNERON

Hiking near Mývatn

meals, where Sigga's talented husband shares his cooking skills hard-won on an Arctic trawler. We are treated to lamb, horse, and a sweet fish curry, accompanied by the ever-present tins of peas and corn. Satisfied with the provision of a remarkable bit of food tourism, Sigga pulls down a map of the northern fjords and sketches out an introduction to the natural wonders of her home island.

Iceland's soaring reputation as a tourist destination has been won on the back of its natural beauty, and our travels inside and outside the fjord did not disappoint. An overnight trip to the otherworldly volcanic fields around the lake of Mývatn proves to be a study in colour as coal-black lava fields lie stark against a freshly fallen dusting of

cloud-white snow. "Mount Doom" jokes abound as the two of us (both compact individuals) make our way up to the crest of the volcanic cone Hverfjall volcanic cone just in time for the flat light of morning to reveal the subtle colour palette of the lava expanse at our feet.

Indeed, the elements are on our side as we put our rental car (studded tires included!) through its paces: skidding across icy coastal roads, scooting over rainy mountain passes, and meandering through the frozen mud of a farmer's field. Snow-covered fields and icy morning mist prove to be no match for the reddish rays of a surprisingly strong winter sun as we make our way to the fairy-tale gem of Skagafjörður: the natural hot spring Fosslaug nestled against a three-storey waterfall.



PHOTO: ADAM VIGNERON

Hverfjall crater

In just a few short days, it became all too clear why Iceland has become such a tourism trend, a fact on which we reflect over a craft beer sampler in the newly renovated pub attached to Sigga's six-room hotel. Later that evening, the pub will host the local chamber of commerce for a pre-Christmas pow-wow. At the top of the agenda: discussing how to highlight the handiwork of local artisans at a family-friendly festival to kick off the holiday season.

Across the fjord and a world away from such delights stands the Icelandic Emigration Center in the postcard-perfect village of Hofsfós. A collection of simple wooden buildings house displays that chronicle each chapter of the story: the

hard subsistence life in the fjord leading up to a decision to depart, the highly unpredictable journey across the Atlantic, and the piecemeal manner in which the Icelandic community in North America built their communities, mixing the old and new worlds.

It must be said, not all the stories are good. In the unvarnished Nordic style to which I grew accustomed during a student exchange in Norway several years earlier, the center's panels tell of a hard life on both sides of the ocean in which triumph and tragedy abound in equal measure. These panels echo the rhythm of the stories we had shared over coffee and cake – Avery's own ancestor, Stefania, was taken from her unwed mother and brought to Canada in the care of a good-hearted relative.

Hardship has likewise coloured Kidda's life; the family's move to Australia and return to Iceland were both motivated by her husband's failing health, her remarkable zest for life being hard-won through many changes in circumstance.

The museum makes concrete much of what I had learned in our family conversations around the fjord. I reflect on the incredible capacity for the Icelandic nation to emerge through struggle. A thousand years since the time of Leif Eriksson and over a hundred years since their arrival in North America, they epitomize the theme of survival against the odds which has played out in Canada countless times: for our Indigenous peoples, for my hard-working Ukrainian ancestors, and for every new Canadian who arrives in our country today with hopes, dreams, and a piece of home in their heart. Once again, I find myself, in a faraway land, with

an ever-clearer idea of the values that bind Canadians – and humans – together.

Having shuffled around a few stray sunbeams in Sauðárhæðum, the family photo is a success and the Canadian cousins have one more snapshot over which they can celebrate. As this is our last stop for the day, Avery and I begin to sort our things for the long drive back to Reykjavík. Realizing this, Guðríður addresses her sister in rapid Icelandic. Kidda smiles and points at my camera:

“Apparently you won't be going anywhere until my sister gets a photo with the nice young man as well.”

As I take my place between these two remarkable women, I realize that this photo, too, will serve as a fine metaphor for this trip. A warm welcome, a grateful guest, and deep family roots. I can't help but smile.

**LÖGBERG
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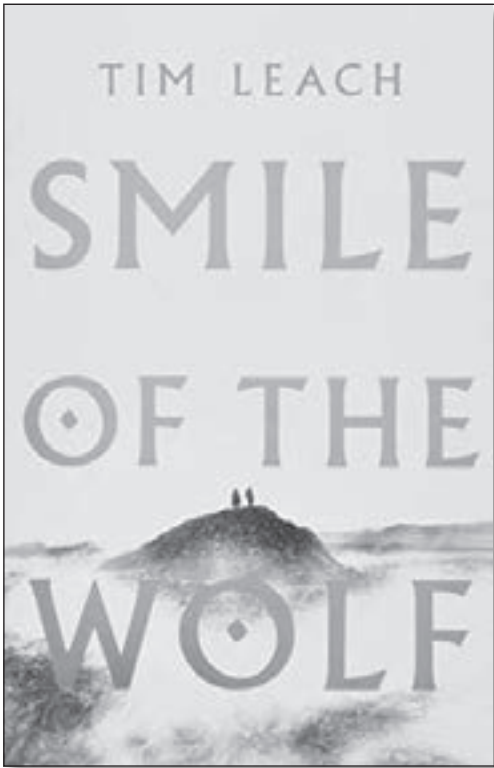
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Book Review

Smile of the Wolf

by Tim Leach

Reviewed by Heiða Simundsson



Smile of the Wolf

By Tim Leach

London, UK: Head of Zeus Publ., 2019

I have to abashedly admit that I have never read any of the Icelandic Sagas. So when asked to review *Smile of the Wolf* which is, as acknowledged by the author Tim Leach, a fictional work inspired by these pieces of Icelandic Literature. Researching the Sagas, it seems that while they have many similarities to the modern novel, they have their own unique style, themes, voice, formats and other variable characteristics that separate them into their own genre, distinct from the novel format I am so familiar with, as variable as that may be. While Leech does write a narrative that contains many elements commonly found in the Sagas, his work is still very much a modern novel.

There are many different themes that can be found in the Sagas. Some tell of the history of the Kings of Norway and Denmark or the history of Icelandic Society in general. They can be about feuds between families that stretch out over generations. They can be about a particular area's history and the struggles of its inhabitants with each other as neighbours along with the supernatural

beings that reside among them. The Sagas can also be focused on the eventful lives of famous skalds that travelled back and forth between the rich courts of Norway and the more desolate lands of Icelandic chieftains. *Smile of the Wolf* has two of these overarching themes heavily embedded in its narrative. The main character, Kjaran is a travelling poet whose love interests and friendships are a part of the story. We also follow him into exile and read of his struggles of evading those who hunt him and how he survives the winters as an outcast. Kjaran's exile is a result of a feud he finds himself involved in, along with his good friend Gunnar to whom he is exceptionally loyal. The feud brings about fights and battles and ultimately deaths – all of which perpetuate the feud as it passes on to new generations. This novel tries to explain the justice system of Medieval Iceland and how after a judgment passed, it was up to individuals to enforce the law, which was ultimately decided by the numbers and strengths of people who were loyal to you and would fight for you. Honour above all was most important to the characters in this novel as it is in the Sagas.

Characteristics of novels that do not appear in the sagas are very much present in *Smile of the Wolf*. Novels often offer insight and motives for a character,

whereas the Sagas do not – they merely detail actions taken and left to the reader to interpret a character's thoughts. In this book, we are privy to the inner thinking of Kjaran and become quite familiar with his personality and why he takes certain actions. The dialogue between him and other characters in the book also lend to insight into the actions and thoughts of others as well. Novels also can have many different strands of narratives, as do the Sagas, but typically in a novel all the strands will eventually tie together and link back to the main narrative. Leach does an excellent job providing a separate narrative that appears sporadically throughout the book that keeps readers guessing as to how it will tie into the story in the end, and as good novels do, we are rewarded as the connections between the two are revealed.

While I think there are elements of Leach's book that align it with the Icelandic Sagas – including characters and settings taken directly from these famous stories, this piece of work definitely is a novel. It is tragic, violent, moving and a beautifully crafted story, as I've heard the sagas described. I would think that anyone familiar with the Sagas would enjoy recognizing familiar characters and setting and themes they first encountered in the Sagas, always remembering this is a novel inspired by the great Icelandic literary works and not in the same genre as them and therefore will have different characteristics. I'm sure the Sagas have inspired many modern-day writers, Tim Leach is the latest to join the ranks. I enjoyed this novel immensely and it inspired me to reading the Sagas themselves – I am long overdue to start.

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BEVERLY ARASON GAUDET'S Icelandic connection is her paternal grandfather, Sigurður Guðbjartur Arason who was born in Iceland in 1891 and came to Canada in 1911. Bev has been involved for years in the Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton and in the INLNA since 2010. She resides in Sherwood Park, AB, with her husband Gordon Gaudet and two pugs, Ginger and Ranger.

HJÁLMAR W. HANNESSON had a distinguished career with the Iceland Foreign Ministry as the country's ambassador in several postings. Among these, he was the first ambassador at the Embassy of Iceland in Ottawa before moving on to Washington to become the Ambassador to the United States. At his final posting before his retirement, he served as Iceland's Consul General in Winnipeg. He is currently the Past-President of Þjóðræknisfélag Íslands (INL Iceland).

JODY ARMAN-JONES is the Snorri West Director for the INLNA Board, Snorri Plus 2012, parent of Snorri 2013, educator by profession, serial volunteer by avocation; her Icelandic ancestors arrived in Grafton, North Dakota in 1883 from East Iceland and in 1892 from South Iceland.

GWEN (JOHNSON) MANN was raised in Churchbridge, Saskatchewan. She trained as a Registered Nurse in Yorkton and subsequently took her diploma in Public Health at the University of Saskatchewan. She worked in this field in Saskatchewan and Alberta during her career and is currently retired and living in Calgary. She has two children and two grandchildren.

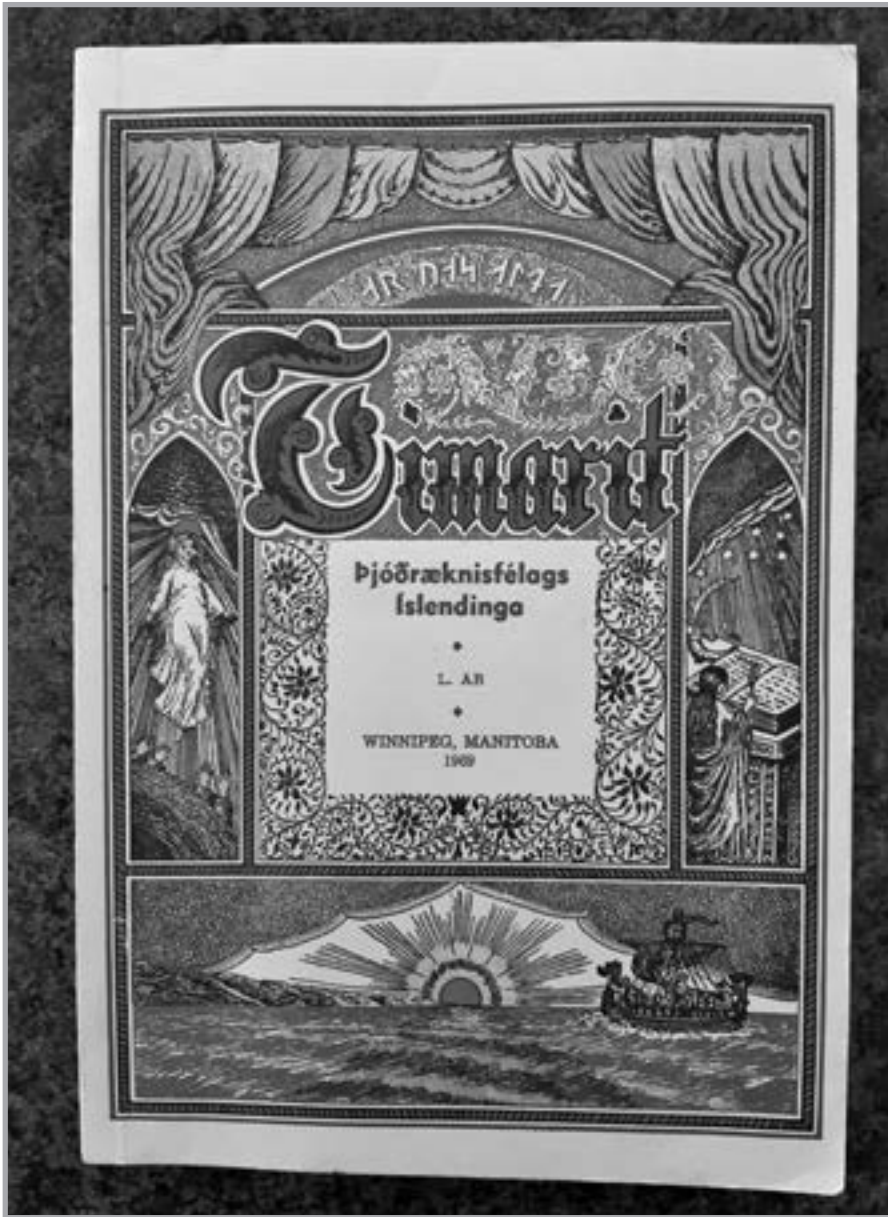
INGRID ROED is a third-generation descendant of Icelandic settlers in Manitoba. She is former teacher and translator (English and French). In retirement, she is working on improving her command of Icelandic and helping others learn it as well.

ELVA SIMUNDSSON, MLIS, is a member of the *Icelandic Connection* board of editors and a random book reviewer, contributor and proofreader for the journal. She lives in Gimli, MB.

HEIÐA SIMUNDSSON is a teacher of mathematics at Arborg High School in Manitoba and a farmer specializing in organic cropping practices.

ADAM VIGNERNON is an aerospace engineer hailing from Wilcox, Saskatchewan. His passion for all things space has led him on a variety of adventures at home and abroad, not the least of which is his current pursuit of an industrial doctorate in southern Germany. In his spare time, Adam enjoys meeting old friends in new surroundings as he continues to learn more about Spaceship Earth and his fellow travellers onboard.





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